

NCA  
VOC FOR PGM/FN  
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5855  
TAKIS KLADAKIS

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EGYPT: AFTER THE REFERENDUM

ANNCR:

THE BANNING OF A LEFTIST WEEKLY MAGAZINE IN CAIRO ON WEDNESDAY (MAY 24) IS SEEN AS EVIDENCE THAT PRESIDENT SADAT IS DETERMINED TO GO AHEAD WITH HIS PLANS TO PURGE EXTREMISTS IN EGYPTIAN POLITICS AND THE NEWS MEDIA....AS WE HEAR IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT BY VOA'S TAKIS KLADAKIS.

VOICE:

IT WAS THE SECOND TIME IN AS MANY WEEKS THAT EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES BANNED THE LEFTIST NEWSPAPER "AL AHALI" -- THE ORGAN OF THE LEFTIST OPPOSITION UNIONIST PROGRESSIVE PARTY. THE NEWSPAPER HAD CRITICIZED LAST SUNDAY'S REFERENDUM, WHICH HAD ENDORSED PRESIDENT SADAT'S PLANS. IT ALSO PREDICTED A POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

IN HIS NEWS CONFERENCE EARLIER THIS WEEK, PRESIDENT SADAT DID NOT GIVE DETAILS ON HOW HE WOULD CARRY OUT HIS PLAN TO REFORM THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LIFE AND TO DISCIPLINE THE PRESS. HE EMPHASIZED HE WOULD NOT TURN AWAY EGYPT FROM DEMOCRACY, AS HIS OPPONENTS HAD CHARGED. BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE MADE CLEAR HE HAD IN MIND A COMPLIANT PRESS. AND ALTHOUGH THE EGYPTIAN LEADER SAID HE WOULD KEEP THE MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM, HE STRONGLY DENOUNCED TWO PARTIES WHICH HAD CRITICIZED HIS POLICIES -- THE CONSERVATIVE "NEW WAFD PARTY" AND THE LEFTIST UNIONIST PROGRESSIVE PARTY. HE ALSO DECLARED HE WOULD BAN MARXISTS ALTOGETHER FROM THE MEDIA AND FROM GOVERNMENT AND TRADE UNION POSITIONS.

PRESIDENT SADAT HAS ALSO MADE CLEAR, HE WILL NOT TOLERATE THE CONSERVATIVES -- THE NEW WAFD PARTY WHICH IS A RECONSTITUTION

OF THE OLD WAFD PARTY THAT DOMINATED EGYPTIAN POLITICS UNDER THE MONARCHY. MISTER SADAT CHARGED THAT NEW WAFDISTS HAVE ONLY CRITICISM FOR MODERN EGYPT, AND THAT THEY WANT A RETURN TO THE PAST.

SOME OBSERVERS SEE THE MOVE AGAINST "AL AHALI" AND PRESIDENT SADAT'S STATEMENTS AS A REACTION TO ATTACKS -- SOMETIMES N O T SO VEILED -- ON THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS BLAMED FOR THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THE COUNTRY IS FACING. LAST YEAR'S BLOODY RIOTS FOMENTED BY THE COMMUNISTS, THEY NOTE, REFLECTED THE POPULATION'S FRUSTRATION. AND PRESIDENT SADAT'S DEMOCRATIZATION MEASURES HAVE ENCOURAGED THE OPPOSITION TO EXPRESS ITS VIEWS MORE OPENLY. NONETHELESS, PRESIDENT SADAT SAYS HE WANTS TO KEEP HIS DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT ALIVE, AND HE HAS APPARENTLY STARTED DEFINING THE LIMITS OF THIS EXPERIMENT.

JS/RCS